

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

A Handbook
for Teaching
Assistants
and Research
Assistants



Art by Gary Taxali

**RAISE
THE
BAR!**

OCADFA

OCADFA acknowledges the sacred land on which we live and work. For over 15,000 years this land has been home to Indigenous people who have lived and continue to live in relation with the land in ways that have been proven to be ecologically sustainable and vital, and that deepen our humanity by honouring our relations.

This land is the territory of the Mississauga of the Credit First Nation, Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Wendat, and Huron Indigenous Peoples.

Today, this meeting place of Tkaronto/Toronto is still home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to be here together, in conversation with Indigenous histories. We are committed to working in solidarity with Indigenous-led activism and to upholding the values and practices that protect the land, care for the people and make it possible to plan for a peaceable future.

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KNOW YOUR UNION

We encourage you to visit the [OCADFA website](#) learn more about your union, your workplace, and your rights.

Who is OCADFA?

The Ontario College of Art & Design Faculty Association (OCADFA) is the union that represents more than 600 faculty and academic staff at OCAD University. The Association was formed in 1965 with the mandate of protecting the rights and improving the working conditions of its members and continues today as the sole recognized bargaining agent for its members and as their voice in the complaint process.

OCADFA Members

Faculty	Academic Staff
➤ Sessional ➤ Contractually Limited Term Appointment (CLTA) ➤ Teaching Stream (TS) ➤ Continuing ➤ Probationary (Tenure-Track) ➤ Tenured	➤ Technicians (contract, probationary, and permanent) ➤ Academic Counsellors (contract, probationary, permanent) ➤ Teaching Assistants (Marker/Grader, and Tutorial Leader) ➤ Research Assistants (Undergraduate and Graduate)

The highest decision maker of OCADFA is the membership. Between membership meetings and votes, the union is steered by an elected [Board of Directors](#) and [Negotiations Committee](#), a [Grievance Committee](#), and is assisted by an [Executive Director](#).

What does OCADFA do?

OCADFA represents all faculty and academic staff in a variety of ways.

First, OCADFA negotiates a [Memorandum of Agreement](#) (MOA) with the University's administration. The MOA serves as our collective agreement and governs the terms and conditions of employment for all faculty and academic staff at OCAD. We have also created an [illustrated zine](#) to summarise the MOA.

Second, OCADFA monitors the University's compliance with the collective agreement, and may file grievances on behalf of individual members, groups of members, or on behalf of

itself, when it believes the University has violated that agreement, or any relevant policy or legislation.

Third, OCADFA represent and advocates for members members in navigating a variety of other workplace issues, such as accessing accommodations, in making or responding to discrimination or harassment complaints, or other employment issues at OCAD.

Fourth, on the provincial or national level, OCADFA advocates for issues affecting the post-secondary sector by working with the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA, the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), and other allies on and off campus.

Follow us on [social media](#) and read our regular *Dispatches* to stay informed on our activities and how you may become involved.

Know Your Workplace

TAs and RAs at OCAD U

Teaching and Research Assistants at OCADU are hired on fixed-term annual contracts, based on a specified number of hours per term as determined by the Dean, Associate Dean and/or supervising faculty member based on the particular needs and format of the course or research project, and set out in writing in advance of the appointment.

OCADFA does not determine the number of hours assigned for TAs and RAs, but if you believe your assigned hours is inconsistent with our Letter of Understanding (LOU) re: TA Assignments, as outlined below, please contact us.

- For courses with no tutorials, faculty will not be assigned a TA subject to the below.

Studio	30 students or fewer	No TA	TA support may be considered in atypical studio classes where class size significantly exceeds 30 students or specific significant teaching assistance is required.
Lecture & Studio Seminar	45 students or fewer	No TA	

- For courses with no tutorials, faculty will be assigned a Marker/Grader or Tutorial Leader in accordance with the below.

Lecture & Studio Seminar	Greater than 45 students	Typically assigned 1.5 hours per student over 45
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- If a course has 90-150 students, one Tutorial Leader, and one possible Marker/Grader may be assigned.
- If a course has more than 151 students, two Tutorial Leaders, and one possible Marker/Grader may be assigned.
- A one-hour tutorial with 30-35 students will be assigned a Tutorial Leader.
- Teaching Assistants who are assigned more than one tutorial will have their hours adjusted.
- In any case, Teaching Assistants/Research Assistants may be assigned no more than an average of 10 hours per week

Categories of TAs and RAs

- Undergraduate Research Assistant
 - Responsibilities listed under MoA Article 37.4.2
- Marker/Grader
 - Responsibilities listed under MoA Articles 37.4.1.1 and 37.4.1.4
- Tutorial Leader
 - Responsibilities listed under MoA Article 37.4.1
- Graduate Research Assistant
 - Responsibilities listed under MOA Article 37.4.2

All TAs and RAs are also paid 6% in lieu of benefits as well as 4% pay in lieu of vacation.

Hourly rates of pay for TAs and RAs (Effective Jan. 1, 2025)

Undergraduate Research Assistant	\$23.53
Marker/Grader	\$32.26
Tutorial Leader	\$37.28
Graduate Research Assistant	\$37.28

Appointment and Reappointment Process

The hiring of Teaching and Research Assistants is covered by Article 34.5 of the MoA. Current graduate students are OCAD are given priority consideration for TA and RA opportunities, but anyone may apply.

A list of vacancies is posted on the University's [job board](#), along with information on how to apply.

Current TAs are often, but not always, reappointed without having to reapply for the following term or next academic year if still enrolled as a graduate student. To aid in that process, you may be asked for an expression of interest which includes your areas of expertise, past TA experience, and your assignment preferences. These reappointments are often made just before or soon after the beginning of term. If you have not been reappointed but want to continuing TAing, be sure to check the above mentioned job board and/or notify the School of Graduate Studies.

Please note that TA and RA contracts are not normally renewable beyond 3 years. If you are a current student, that 3 year cap may be waived, subject to the approval of the Dean of Faculty (or designate).

Know Your Rights as a TA and RA

Understanding your contract

Contracted hours of work

If you are hired as a TA or an RA at OCADU, you will receive a contract with an offer of employment that includes, as per Article 34.5.7 in the MoA:

- 1) the term of contract;
- 2) the hours of work; and
- 3) the starting salary.

This offer of employment must be signed and returned by the listed date along with any other necessary documents such as Ontario and Federal tax forms, direct deposit information for Payroll, and personal contact information, if you have not already completed these.

If your hours of work for your TAs or RAs are not clearly listed on your contract, please get in touch with OCADFA and/or whomever sent you your appointment offer, as you have the right to know how many hours have been assigned as part of your TA or RA contract.

If you are working at OCADU for the first time, you will also be required to submit your Social Insurance Number (SIN) number to OCADU HR to verify your identity.

TA Training

As outlined in Article 29.4.7, you will be provided with 5 hours of paid training per academic year, plus an additional 3 hours of course-specific paid training for each TA appointment.

TA and RA duties

Your duties as a Teaching or Research Assistant are outlined in Article 37.4 of the MoA.

Teaching Assistant

- Please note that if you are Marker/Grader, you're responsible for only the 1st and 4th duty.
- Working with 1 or more OCAD U Faculties, directly supervised by 1 or more faculty members with administrative supervision of or more Associate Deans;
- Working with Associate Deans, Chairs, faculty members and other academic staff in support of the University's educational goals and objectives;
- Meeting these educational goals by assisting with course preparation and delivery, i.e. organizing teaching and learning materials, and other resources, based on curricular outlines provided by a supervising faculty member, or by providing group instruction in specialized techniques;
- Assisting in the evaluation of student work, using criteria established by the supervising faculty members;
- Supporting students in their learning, i.e. through individual or small group instruction and/or assisting with assignments
- Conducting separately scheduled tutorial classes;
- Working with Technicians, class assistants and/or monitors, where relevant, by ensuring the appropriate and safe use of materials, equipment and/or facilities; and,
- Participating in the provision of a safe and secure environment for all members of the University community and its facilities.

If you are employed as a Tutorial Leader the below is a sample of some of the duties assigned as part of your position along with suggested number of total hours allotted for each duty. We strongly encourage you to discuss with your supervising faculty the

associated duties for your position along with the breakdown of hours for each duty to ensure that you do not go over the hours assigned in your contract. Please note that there may be some duties that are not included in the below list that supervising faculty may like you to complete and so it is imperative that you discuss this with your supervising faculty to ensure that you are both aware of what duties are included in your position so as to not be asked to complete or take on work that you were previously unaware of.

As a TA, you are expected to work no more than an average of 10 hours a week on TA related duties, though there may be some weeks where you will occasionally exceed this number, such as during the grading of exams and assignments.

TUTORIAL LEADER FALL/WINTER WORKLOAD 2021-2022			
TUTORIAL LEADER Pay Rate = \$1.58 /hour plus 1% in lieu of benefits plus vacation pay			
One Section	Tutorial Leader with Separate Tutorial (VISC-1011, VISC-1002, VISC-1004)	Tutorial Leader without Separate Tutorial	
Attend all lectures	2 hrs x 13 weeks	36	2 hrs x 13 weeks
Tutorial classes	1 hr x 12 weeks	12	
Preparation/Consultation/Training	hrs over 12 weeks	30	hrs over 12 weeks
Office hours/Admin	1 hr x 13 weeks	13	1 hr x 13 weeks
Marking	1.5 hrs x 90 students	45	1.5 hrs x 60 students
Final wrap up	1 hour	1	1 hour
COVID Training (once per academic year)		5*	5*
Pay	Total Hours	122	Total Hours
	Hours/week @15 weeks	8	Hours/week @15 weeks
Two Sections in Same Lecture Section	Tutorial Leader with Separate Tutorials (VISC-1001, VISC-1002, VISC-1004)	Tutorial Leader without Separate Tutorials	
Attend all lectures	2 hrs x 13 weeks	26	2 hrs x 13 weeks
Tutorial classes	2 hrs x 12 weeks	24	
Preparation/Consultation/Training	hrs over 12 weeks	42	hrs over 12 weeks
Office hours/Admin	1 hr x 13 weeks	13	1 hr x 13 weeks
Marking	1.5 hrs x 60 students	90	1.5 hrs x 120 students
Final wrap up	2 hours	2	1 hour
COVID Training (once per academic year)		5*	5*
Pay	Total Hours	202	Total Hours
	Hours/week @15 weeks	13	Hours/week @15 weeks
Three Sections in Same Lecture Section	Tutorial Leader with Separate Tutorials (VISC-1001, VISC-1002, VISC-1004)		
Attend all lectures	2 hrs x 13 weeks	26	
Tutorial classes	3 hrs x 13 weeks	39	
Preparation/Consultation/Training	hrs over 12 weeks	54	
Office hours/Admin	1 hr x 13 weeks	13	
Marking	1.5 hrs x 90 students	135	
Final wrap up	3 hours	3	
COVID Training (once per academic year)		5*	
Pay	Total Hours	232	
	Hours/week @15 weeks	15	

Research Assistant (Undergraduate or Graduate)

- Working within 1 or more OCAD U Faculties, directly supervised by 1 or more Principal Investigators whose workload includes Research/Professional;
- Working with Associate Deans, Chairs, and/or faculty members and other academic staff in support of the University's research goals and objectives;
- Meeting these research goals by assisting with data collection, literature searches, data compilation, processing, entry and analysis, and experimental systems design, fabrication and maintenance;

- Assisting with supervision of research activities in the lab, classroom, and within the field;
 - Assisting with preparation of proposals, progress and final reports, and promotion of research activities;
 - Providing project coordination, budget management, and administration of research activities;
 - Participating in the hiring, scheduling and supervision of Undergraduate Research Assistants, for Graduate Research Assistants, Class Assistants, and/or Student Monitors, where relevant;
 - Working with Technicians, class assistants and/or student monitors, where relevant, by ensuring the appropriate and safe use of materials, equipment and/or facilities; and
 - Participating in the provision of a safe and secure environment for all members of the University community and its facilities.
- For both categories, your responsibilities are not limited to the above, but if you're given responsibilities that seem unreasonably outside the expected duties please check in with OCADFA.

Payroll and how to submit timesheets

- A. If you are employed as a Marker/Grader in order to get paid you will need to submit weekly timesheets online through the web time entry portal in increments of 0.25 hours. For example, if you have marked for 15, 30, or 45 minutes, these would be inputted as 0.25, 0.50, or 0.75 increments of an hour. You will need to input your hours each week even if you worked 0 hours that week as hours are approved bi-weekly, and making backdated claims after the hours have been approved creates issues for the administrative staff and Payroll. It is also important that you do not work on statutory holidays when possible, as any hours claimed on statutory holidays are paid as time and a half, which means you use up more of your assigned hours in your contract.

To enter your hours you would log into your MyOCADU Portal and select "Time Entry and Approval." Detailed instructions on how to enter hours into the web time entry portal as well as the bi-weekly payroll schedule from OCADU HR should be included with your offer of appointment.

- B. If you are employed as a Tutorial Leader or a Research Assistant, you do not need to submit weekly timesheets as you will be paid automatically on a bi-weekly basis provided that your banking information has been received and processed by Payroll.

Accessing your paystubs

To access your paystubs, you would log into your MyOCADU Portal, select “Pay Statements,” and select the year.

Keeping track of your hours

Tips and tools for tracking your hours

We want to reassure you that no one – not faculty, not your Department Chairs or Deans, and not administrative staff – thinks it acceptable for you to work more hours than you’re paid for. However, to make sure that isn’t happening it’s important to track your hours so that you can inform your supervising faculty member if it appears that you will exceed your contracted hours of work before the end of your appointment.

There are a few ways we recommend to track your hours:

1. Task based:
 - Where you calculate the average time it takes to assess a project, and multiply that by how many of those you’ve marked to determine how much of your contracted hours were expended on each task.
2. Manually: In a day planner, journal, or Excel spreadsheet
3. Using a time tracking application: The two free apps that are most suited to TA positions are [Clockify](#) and [Toggl](#). These are particularly suitable because they are not very complicated to set up, and you can alert them to begin clocking whenever you are working on Canvas as well as manually input hours that you spend working offline.

Any time spent in the Service of TAing or RAing should be counted for compensation. This includes time spent doing course readings, viewing lecture content or attending lectures, conducting Teams meeting, answering emails, and corresponding with your supervising faculty as well as any time spent marking.

What to do if you’ve gone over your contracted hours

As noted earlier, you are expected to work no more than an average of 10 hours a week on TA related duties, though there may be some weeks where you will occasionally exceed this number.

Please let your supervising faculty know as soon as possible if you are close to or have exceeded the number of hours as agreed upon in your supervising faculty. If you are close to reaching your assigned hours, your supervising faculty and yourself (and the other TAs) can revisit the agreed upon TA duties to adjust the time of completion for the expected duties or eliminate some of these duties altogether. Your supervising faculty may also, with your permission, request from your hiring department or the Dean’s Office that additional hours be

added to your contract to fulfill your expected duties; please note that additional hours are not guaranteed and is subject to approval.

It is important to note that you do NOT have to work unpaid hours beyond your contract if your assigned hours have already been exceeded. It is your right as a member of OCADFA to refuse to complete unpaid work and your supervising faculty, as a fellow OCADFA member, should not be putting you in the uncomfortable position of asking that you work for free. If your supervising faculty is insisting that you take on additional unpaid work beyond your contract after you have let them know that you have exceeded your contracted hours, please get in touch with OCADFA and we can discuss with you the possible remedies you may have to address this situation, which can include filing a grievance if need be.

We stress that while you may feel pressured to take on this additional unpaid work so as to not upset or rock the boat with your supervising faculty or your hiring department, it is your supervising faculty who should not be putting you in the untenable position of doing additional unpaid labour, and so please do reach out to OCADFA if you find yourself in this situation.

Academic freedom

As per Article 5 of the MoA, all faculty and academic staff, including TAs and RAs, have the right to academic freedom in their teaching, including the right to conduct tutorials as you see fit, as adopted by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) on May 5, 1988.

“Academic freedom is essential to the teaching function of the University, as well as to the creative and scholarly pursuits of the faculty, academic staff, other staff, and students. This includes a commitment to unfettered intellectual and aesthetic inquiry and judgment and to the provision of those textual, audio, and visual resources necessary to free inquiry and practice. Academic freedom includes: the right of responsible teaching from a subjective point of view; the right to freedom of creative practice or expression; and the right of dialogue, discussion, debate and criticism in the exercise of professional responsibilities including those referred to herein.”

Filing a complaint or grievance (OCADFA)

As a member of OCADFA, you have the right to ask us to file a grievance on your behalf (see page 4 of this *Handbook*), if you believe the University has violated the MoA or an applicable policy or legislation, regarding your employment.

The grievance procedure is outlined in Article 13 of the MoA, and includes an informal complaint, formal grievance, and mediation/arbitration process. OCADFA can be of assistance in the informal stage, and will represent you if a formal grievance is warranted.

Grievances must be filed within 21 calendar days of the alleged infraction, or the date in which the Grievor first knew or ought reasonable to have known of the infraction. This means

if you believe you may need to file a grievance, it is important to reach out to us as soon as practical.

Discrimination, harassment, and bullying (HREO)

For cases related to discrimination, harassment, and bullying within the OCADU community, including from OCADU students (graduate, undergraduate, and continuing education students, and students in process), staff, faculty, visiting professors, sessional faculty, teaching assistants, librarians, volunteers, visitors, observers, institutional administrators, officials representing OCAD U, and contractors and employees of other organizations not related to the University but who nevertheless work on, or are invited onto, University premises, this would fall within the purview of the [Respectful Workplace and Learning Environment Policy](#) (RWLEP) and the [Human Rights and Equity Office](#) (HREO) would address these issues.

Types of behaviour which would fall within the scope of the RWLEP would include discrimination, harassment, and bullying on any Ontario Human Rights Code grounds, such as on the basis of one's race/ethnicity, sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding)/sexual orientation/gender identity/gender expression, disability (including mental, physical, developmental and learning disabilities, including temporary and episodic disabilities), age, religion and spirituality, family status (being in a parent-child relationship)/marital status, and citizenship status. Sexual harassment (including sexual solicitation) as well as creating a poisoned work environment would also be behaviours which violate the RWLEP.

Members should contact the Director of People & Culture or HREO with concerns that fall under the purview of this policy, though OCADFA can work with both complainants (if you are filing an RWLEP complaint) and respondents (if you are on the receiving end of one) throughout the RWLEP process.

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

As per the [OCADU website](#), "Sexual violence is broad and includes a range of behaviours, such as sexual assault, stalking, indecent exposure, voyeurism, sexual exploitation, and others.

If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence, we suggest reviewing the above linked website for resources and support OCADU can offer. We also recommend reaching out to OCADFA for support. OCADFA strongly believes in survivor-centric responses, and we can support you through whatever direction you choose to pursue.

Dealing with workplace health and safety issues

You have the right to a safe workplace, including a harassment free work environment. If you have any health and safety concerns, please speak to your supervising faculty or faculty

office as soon as possible. If you are unable to find help, or are unsatisfied with the help you received, please contact OCADFA.

Every worker in Ontario also has the right to refuse unsafe work - that is, work that is likely to endanger yourself. While we do not anticipate you should ever need to refuse unsafe work, we invite you to read the following [guide on your right to refuse unsafe work](#).

It is important to be aware that OCADU is not enrolled in WSIB Ontario (Workplace Safety and Insurance Board) coverage. That means, in the case of injury, WSIB support and services is not available to OCADU employees. If you are injured in the course of employment at OCADU, we strongly recommending contacted OCADFA for support as soon as you are able.

Right to reasonable accommodation

You also have the right to reasonable accommodation on *Ontario Human Rights Code* based grounds, such as on the grounds of disability, sex/pregnancy, family status, age, creed, gender identity, and gender expression. If you think you may need a workplace accommodation to perform your employment duties, please see OCADFA's guide to your [Right to Reasonable Accommodation](#) and contact us for any questions or support you may need.

Know Your Benefits

Health benefits

Unfortunately, TAs and RAs with contracts at OCADU are not eligible to enroll in the group benefits plan available to permanent academic staff and faculty. Instead, you are paid 6% in lieu of benefits.

However, undergraduate students who are enrolled in 1.5 credits or more in September or January as well as graduate students who have declared full-time status are automatically enrolled in the OCAD U Student Health and Dental Plan. All students are able to make changes to their coverage during the first month of studies by opting in, opting out, or adding dependents to the health and/or dental plans.

The plan covers:

- prescription drugs;
- health practitioners (e.g. chiropractors, physiotherapists, massage therapists, etc.);
- dental exams and cleanings;
- fillings and root canals;
- travel health coverage

You can find more details in the [OCADU Student Health and Dental Plan](#).

Sick leave

Sick Leave for Academic Staff such as TAs and RAs is provided for in Article 31.6 of the MoA. If you require sick leave you should inform your supervising faculty as soon as reasonably possible. You may be required to provide proof of illness or disability for any absence of more than seven calendar days.

Pregnancy and parental leave

Covered by Article 31.7 of the MoA, Academic Staff such as TAs and RAs who have been employed by the University for at least thirteen (13) weeks shall be entitled to a leave of absence without pay for pregnancy and/or parental leave in accordance with the provisions of the *Employment Standards Act*. Pregnancy leave may be taken for up to seventeen (17) weeks.

Graduate students may also take a parental leave from their studies within twelve months of the date of birth or adoption, for a maximum of three continuous terms. We recommend contacting the [School of Graduate Studies](#) for assistance.

Bereavement leave

As per Article 31.9.1.3 of the MoA, Bereavement Leave without pay for up to three days may be granted, approval shall not be unreasonably withheld. If you find yourself needing bereavement leave, please notify your supervisory faculty as soon as reasonably possible.

Compassionate care leave

As per Article 31.9.2 of the MoA, you may be granted a leave of absence without pay for up to eight (8) weeks to provide compassionate care and support to an immediate family member with a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death occurring within a period of twenty-six (26) weeks. Approval shall not be unreasonably withheld.

Personal emergency leave

As per Article 31.9.3 of the MoA you may be granted a leave of absence without pay for up to ten (10) days per calendar year because of personal illness, injury or medical emergency, or death, illness, injury or medical or other emergency of a family member. Documentation (medical or otherwise) may be required to substantiate such leave.

Legal leave (i.e. jury duty)

As per Article 31.10 of the MoA, you shall be granted leave of absence with pay to serve as a juror or witness in a court of law in a matter in which you are not a party or an accused.

Contact Us

Website: www.ocadfa.ca

Executive Director: [Graeme Reniers](#)

OCADFA President: [Min Sook Lee](#)

Grievance Issues: [Graeme Reniers](#)

All other inquiries: [OCADFA General Email](#)

Social Media:

- LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/ocadfa
- Instagram: www.instagram.com/ocadfa
- Bluesky: www.bsky.app/profile/ocadfa.bsky.social
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/OCADFA
- YouTube: www.youtube.com/@OCADFA