

Sample Communication Document for Teaching Team

“Communication is critical - communication with your TAs is always important, but it’s particularly so when you move to online teaching. You won’t have the opportunity to ‘run into’ your TA in the hall and have a quick chat about your course. Frequent, consistent, and intentional communication with your TAs will help set you, them, and your students up for success. If applicable consider scheduling a bi-weekly check-ins with your TAs, perhaps through a short online meeting or emails.” - [Online Teaching Program, module 8.9](#)

This document is designed to help you develop your own communication document; context will differ based on your discipline, the kind of course you are working on, and number of members on your teaching team.

Questions to guide your contract:

How frequently will the teaching team check-in synchronously?

What will be the teaching team’s preferred communication channel for asynchronous check-ins (email, Slack, Canvas messages, Canvas ‘chat’)?

How frequently will each party be checking communication channels?

What is the best way for the instructor to reach the TA(s) in case of an emergency, and vice versa?

How many TA work hours have you allotted to communication (with instructor, other TA’s, students, etc.) throughout the term?

What are some guiding principles all parties will use in case of conflict either (a) on the teaching team, or (b) between the students and the teaching team?

Some additional questions:

What other questions could you add/consider for your own context?

(i.e. number of TAs, expected turnaround time for content creation of Quizzes, slides, demonstration videos etc.)

How will your communication contract change based on the content/size of a course?

What have you done in the past that worked for your teaching team that you can implement in an online space?

Will a “communication contract” work for you? If not, what alternate ways can you ensure consistent communication?

Plan for long-term communication:

Do you have any recommendations to offer on how best to plan for long-term communication?

What format would work best for you? (i.e. a chart with specific meeting dates, a space for the TA to contribute their own ideas, a checklist, a shared calendar with your TA?)

Here is a sample of what a communication plan could look like. Feel free to add/edit/brainstorm as you see fit:

| | Example | Beginning of Term | During Term | End of Term/Beyond |
|------------|--|-------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Instructor | Propose meeting dates for marking assignments, leading labs, exam invigilation | | | |
| TA | Review course schedule and term commitments, inform instructor of comprehensive exams, course exams, or any opportunities that may conflict with TA duties | | | |

Some key recommendations:

1. **Use the syllabus to your advantage:** adding the name and the role (i.e. tutorial facilitator, marker, lab facilitator) of each TA to the syllabus allows students to better understand the role of the TA.
2. **Set expectations:** the TA and the instructor can establish expectations for running tutorials/discussions/labs, what to do in case of marking disputes, and confirm the TA's allocation of hours form (see article 12.02 in the [CUPE 2278 Collective Agreement](#); to be updated fall 2020). The instructor can also set expectations with students on how the TA will support the class.
3. **Check-in regularly:** schedule check-ins with the teaching team to ensure consistency in grading, use of hours per the allocation form, and any other course-specific information.
4. **Review the OTP module:** if you haven't already, read through module 8, [the role of teaching assistants in the online classroom](#), and reflect which aspects will be helpful for your teaching team.