



**KNOW  
YOUR  
RIGHTS**



And how to use  
them!

# AGENDA

- Introductions:
  - Tell me your department and how long you've been a TA for!
- What is CUPE2278?
- What are your rights?
  - Activity!
- Using your rights!
  - Activity!
- Get your questions answered!



# INTRODUCTIONS!

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What department do you TA in?

How long have you been a TA?

Favourite part of being a TA?

Least favourite part of being a TA?



# ICE BREAKER: WHAT IS A UNION??

- How would *you* define a union?
- Put your answers in the chat!



# WHAT IS CUPE 2278?

- **Your union!**
  - **Union:** collection of workers who have the legally recognized ability to negotiate a shared contract
- **CUPE = Canadian Union of Public Employees**
  - About 700 000 members
  - Strike and Legal Defence fund of around 100 million dollars
- **Made up of 3 components: You are component 1!**
  - Component 2 = English Language Instructors
  - Component 3 = TAs at UNBC
- **Component 1 has about 2700 members!**



# BRIEF CUPE 2278 HISTORY

In 1978 a group of TAs formed the Association of Teaching Assistants and demanded recognition from UBC. They were not recognized as a legitimate union.

In 1980 CUPE 2278 was certified as a union by the Labour Relations Board of BC.

In 1988 ELI instructors joined CUPE 2278 after the Labour Relations Board ruled that they could not form their own bargaining unit.

TAs at UNBC vote to unionize and they join CUPE2278

1979

1987

2003

1978

1980

1988

2018

In 1979 ATA members voted to join CUPE and held a unionization campaign.

In 1987 English Language Instructors formed their own union - the English Language Institute Sessional Instructors Association (ELISIA).

In 2003 CUPE 2278 held its first full-blown strike, and even ignored a court ruling it to cease loud protest. Eventually the union was forced back to work by new legislation.



# STRUCTURE OF COMPONENT 1

- Component 1 leadership committee = President, Vice President, Component 1 chair, Recording Secretary + any interested member!
- Component 1 meetings = every 2 weeks. Elected folks vote on issues that pertain to component 1
- Other committees: Mobilization, Communication



CUPE 2278

**QUICK GUIDE**

www.cupe2278.ca

# YOUR RIGHTS!

- Bargained via negotiations to establish a new shared contract: the collective agreement
- The collective agreement is very long and boring, so we made a Quick Guide!
- It's available on our website!
- It's also the first link I pasted in the chat!

Department rep email: \_\_\_\_\_

**HOW TO CONTACT YOUR UNION**

For general information, check out our website. If you have any questions about your rights as a Teaching Assistant or Marker, contact the Advocate at [advocate@cupe2278.ca](mailto:advocate@cupe2278.ca). Such conversations are confidential and private.

**WHO IS A MEMBER OF CUPE 2278?**

Everyone hired by UBC as a Teaching Assistant and/or a Marker is a member of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 2278. If you worked in either of these positions during the last 12 months, you are a current union member, even if you are currently not working or are no longer a student.

**RE-APPOINTMENT & HIRING PREFERENCE**

- Once you have been hired, you are guaranteed further TA appointments for a specific period, depending on your academic classification:
  - ❖ **Doctoral students** – have preference over new hires for 4 years after their first year of employment
  - ❖ **Masters students** – have preference over new hires for 1 year after their first year of employment
  - ❖ **Undergraduate students** – have preference over new hires for 1 year after their first year of employment
- The employer is required to hire you for at least the same number of hours that you worked during your first year of employment, but is not

required to offer you a TA position in the same course you worked the previous year.

- All TA appointments and preference considerations are contingent upon departmental budgets.

**WAGES & EMPLOYMENT CLASSIFICATION (As of Sept. 1, 2020)**

There are currently six wage categories for members of CUPE 2278. Your wage classification is determined by the degree(s) you have earned and/or your job duties:

- ❖ **STA Senior Teaching Assistant** – \$36.85/hr (enrolled in a graduate program; tasks include coordinating and/or guiding other teaching assistants and/or developing curriculum under the guidance of a faculty member)
- ❖ **GTA I** – \$34.44/hr (has an undergraduate degree and at least two years' experience as a graduate teaching assistant)
- ❖ **GTA II** – \$33.14/hr (has an undergraduate degree in the posted discipline *OR* is enrolled in a masters program)
- ❖ **UTA I** – \$20.33/hr (employee has not yet earned an undergraduate degree in the posted discipline; interacts with students, including giving feedback on assignments)
- ❖ **UTA II** – \$18.15/hr (employee has not yet earned an undergraduate degree in the posted discipline; does not have substantial student contact)
- ❖ **Marker** – \$15.86/hr (not defined by degree level; marking with no substantial student contact)





# SICK LEAVE

- 12 hours of sick leave
- Can be broken up
- Can be banked forward to a maximum of 24 hours
- This is paid sick leave, meaning that another TA or the instructor will take over the duties you miss.



# ACADEMIC HARM

- Your status as a worker is separate from your status as a student.
- What happens in your TAship shouldn't be having an academic effect
- This means: you shouldn't see any academic repercussions for any issues that come up during your TAship.



# HOURS OF WORK

- You cannot be required to work more than 8 hours in a day
- You cannot be required to work more than 24 hours in a week
- You cannot be required to work 24 hours before your own final exam
- You cannot be required to work before 7:30 a.m. and after 8 p.m.



# LEAVES OF ABSENCE

- Unpaid leave of absence to attend academic conferences
- Unpaid leave of absence to attend your own comprehensive exams or academic defense
- 5 days paid leave of absence for victims of domestic violence



# ALLOCATION OF HOURS

- If you only remember one thing from this session, remember this!
- You need to insist on an allocation of hours form.
- There is one on our website that you can give to your supervisor if they are not forthcoming with their own.
- An allocation of hours form = any written documentation of how it is that you are meant to be spending your contracted hours



# THINGS TO LOOK FOR:

- Email
- Office Hours
- Guest lecturing
- Preparing
- Union Orientation
- Vacation hours (8 per “full time” TAship)
- Meetings with your supervisor
- Attending lecture
- Grading breakdown per assignment



# RED FLAGS

- You're being asked to turn in a timesheet
- Your academic supervisor comes to talk to you about your TAship
- You don't receive the same amount of pay
- You're not hired as a TA, but are doing key TA duties
- You haven't been given an allocation of hours form
- Your allocation of hours has many "unallocated" hours
- The total doesn't add up to what your supervisor claims it does
- You are supervising other TAs, but not hired as an STA



# QUESTIONS??





# ACTIVITY:

- Imagine you're on the bargaining committee. What are you going to try to bargain for? What rights do you wish you had? Come up with 3 proposals. Try and be as outside the box as you like!
  
- Goal of the exercise: try to think about what protections you have by way of thinking about what protections you might want, but currently lack!



# USING YOUR RIGHTS

- Most issues are misunderstandings
- Common misunderstandings:
  - Supervisor doesn't know about the restrictions on working hours
  - Supervisor doesn't know they need to fill in an allocation of hours form
  - Supervisor doesn't know that student and worker status are distinct
  - Supervisor doesn't realize how long their marking will actually take
  - Supervisor doesn't realize how much correspondence with students the TA is doing
  - TA doesn't realize that they need to track their hours and let their TA supervisor know if they anticipate a problem
  - TA doesn't realize exactly what is expected in marking
  - TAs are mistaken about what their rights actually are.



# HAVING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

- Almost all issues that are brought to us are resolved through conversations
- These conversations are difficult to have
- There are power dynamics at play that make it difficult to bring up issues
- Because issues are difficult to bring up, it can be easy to put off having the conversation. But this only makes things worse!
- It is essential to talk to your supervisor as soon as you foresee a problem.



# BEFORE YOU HAVE THE CONVERSATION

- Ask yourself:
  - What is the clearest presentation of the issue?
  - What is the resolution I'm hoping for?
  - What are other possible resolutions I would be okay with?
  - What is a resolution I'm not ok with?
  - What am I worried about, going into this conversation?
- Prepare:
  - Find the best way to present the issue, given your concerns
  - Get some advice! Come talk to us! Voice your concerns. Double check your understanding of your rights.
  - Think through some possible ways the conversation might go.
  - Are the risks you foresee still the same?



# ASSUMPTIONS TO AVOID!

- That you're doing something wrong
- That the conversation will go poorly
- That you know what your supervisor will say
- That you have to respond immediately to what they say
- That you have to resolve the issue in one meeting
- That the situation will resolve itself without a conversation
- That you know your supervisor's assumptions



# ACTIVITY: THINKING THROUGH A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

- Let's tackle the following scenario:

You've given 100 hours to mark 4 assignments. You mark the first one, and it takes about 50 hours.

- In breakout rooms, try and act out how a conversation about this issue might go!
  - Alt: brainstorm how you could best prepare for the conversation needed to address this issue. Consider the following questions:
    - 1) What makes this conversation difficult? What am I worried about?
    - 2) What resolution am I hoping for?
    - 3) What assumptions might I be bringing to the conversation?



# WHEN A CONVERSATION ISN'T ENOUGH...

- The union has a conversation.
- *The grievance process* = just a series of formal conversations



# GRIEVANCES

- Formal conversations had at different levels.
- “Step 1” : A conversation with the department
- “Step 2” : A conversation with the Dean
- “Step 3” : A conversation with the VP
- If no resolution, an external arbitrator is brought in to decide the issue.





# OTHER WAYS TO USE YOUR RIGHTS

- The grievance process is only one of the ways you can stand up for yourself
- Organizing around common issues is another way to use your union to help advance your rights.
- Are other people experiencing the same issue? Consider bringing it up together.
- Is the issue something that we could bargain for better protection to resolve?



# ORGANIZING

- In union lingo, this means planning a campaign to enact change.
- We are *always* organizing
- Organizing is a science. There are courses we take to learn how to do it.
- If you are interested in learning more about organizing, let me know!



# QUESTIONS??



# GIVE US SOME FEEDBACK!

- [https://ubc.ca/qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_0Aloxtt8nrdWI06](https://ubc.ca/qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0Aloxtt8nrdWI06)

