

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. 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 expected to check 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?

Plan for communication during the term:

What are some things you can do to enhance your communication? Brainstorm below what could happen at different times throughout the term. You can use the chart to create a communication contract, or to reflect individually throughout the term.

	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.