

Minutes - CUPE 3909 Meeting to discuss issues that T.A.'s are experiencing

Meeting held: Thursday, October 8, 2009, from 12:00 to 1:00 pm.
Present: Qiuyan Yuan, Vice President, Unit 1, CUPE 3909;
Dave West, Staff Relations Officer, Human Resources;
Approx. 40 Teaching Assistants (~~list of names and departments~~
~~–attached~~)
Venue: Graduate Student Lounge, University Centre
Minutes: Sharon Nelson

Issues at Hand:

1. Importance of "The Daily Record of Time Worked" survey
2. Hours worked
3. T.A. hour reduction
4. Feedback for TAs performance
5. Exam invigilation payment
6. Course assignment solutions
7. Other issues or suggestions T.A.s may have

Meeting started at noon.

- ◆ Approx. 90% of students present were from the Faculty of Engineering
- ◆ Dave West from Human Resources introduced himself.
- ◆ He said Daily Record of Time Worked Survey was established as a joint effort with CUPE and H.R.
- ◆ The reason for this survey was that it was heard that the T.A.s had many differences, the main issue being, not being paid for all hours worked and/or, not being able to complete tasks in amount of hours they were hired for.
- ◆ Dave said this is the first survey of this kind sent out to all T.A.s
- ◆ H.R. sent 700-900 surveys out to students
- ◆ These are very useful to HR, CUPE, and T.A.s themselves
- ◆ Dave West mentioned that he hopes T.A.s will have the time to fill this out, *as no change will come if no one participates in this survey.*
- ◆ IMPORTANT: If T.A.s want H.R. to help them, then H.R. needs the information from the surveys as ammunition to justify to the Faculties/Dept. Heads the T.A.s issues and concerns.
- ◆ H.R. compiling data from the surveys and sharing with CUPE in January, 2010.
- ◆ Dave told the T.A.s when filling out Daily Record survey, if need be, you may add another heading column if there is another issue for you. eg. Time spent on preparation for solutions.
- ◆ H.R. said for T.A.s to talk to department heads if they are having problems, but realizes that there is reluctance on the T.A.s part to approach their Departments, as they do not want to "rock the boat".
- ◆ H.R. can lobby on T.A.s behalf if they have enough feedback from the surveys.
- ◆ The survey document will not be shared with the T.A.s supervisor or department. Aggregated data will be shared.
- ◆ Need to send out email to T.A.s to send survey back to Human Resources. (not CUPE)

- ◆ The Main issues at hand shared by T.A.s today were:
 - some T.A.s are not getting paid for all the hours worked
 - some Departments do not pay T.A.s for final exams invigilation
 - at times, preparation for solutions by T.A.s is expected, but this takes many more hours to complete
 - It was also noted that some T.A.s were told to perform duties that are not outlined in their job description and do not want to say anything, afraid they will not get hired back while they need the job.
 - demonstrating
 - lectures, power point presentations
 - physical work in order to prepare materials for testing in the lab which is a lab technician duty
 - T.A.s said that there are many more students enrolled in University, and they do not enough time to spend with students, therefore feel students' education is in jeopardy

T.A.s questions to Dave West at meeting today (answers from H.R. underneath questions)

Q. How many surveys do you need from student to make a difference in the issues at hand?

A. Approx. 30% from one Faculty would definitely mean there is a problem, and taken seriously.

Q. What can H.R. do if T.A.s get no satisfaction from their Department.

A. If H.R. receives a high percentage of surveys back with data backing up problems that T.A.s are facing, then that information will be sent from H.R. to the Dean/s and Department Heads, then back to Administration for review.

Q. Who is responsible in determining the amount of hours required for a T.A. position?

A. Departments

Student comments:

Engineering student: There is a higher student enrolment, tuitions are rising, but not more T.A.s or more hours for T.A.s; where does the money go to? Students' education being jeopardized.

T.A. suggested T.A.s not to be assigned to work with their own supervisor. He worked more hours than hired for, and did not complain, as he was working with his supervisor, and did not want to affect the work relationship.

Complaint: After student signed his T.A. letter of offer, 10 hrs. per week, ending Dec. 14th/09, he was asked a month later to help with exam at the end of December including invigilating and marking/grading.

Students are voicing that the responsibilities of a Teaching Assistant need to be clearer. Some students are being asked to do a lot.

Student asking union to help with a more clearer definition of Teaching Assistant duties and make this known to the Departments and instructors.

Students are asking for protocol, defining guidelines for the positions in Unit 1.

Student complaint – He works twice as many hours as he gets paid for. He suggested that a survey be filled out by the T.A. and handed to the department (the hours that the student has worked, eg. the past 2 weeks)

Some of the T.A.'s in Engineering asked Dave West if they could have a meeting with the Dean, and have Human Resources present, so that they can voice their concerns. Dave West said he is sure the Dean would not have a problem with that.

A T.A. from Agriculture Faculty was present and said he had no complaints about his Department. He said he has a meeting every two weeks with his department to discuss work load, hours worked, etc. and has no complaints.

Student comment – Each department is different as they have different budgets.