

Teaching Commons News For Graduate Students

Welcome to the Teaching Commons!!

We are delighted to welcome you to the Teaching Commons (TC). Whether you are new to York University, or a returning TA wanting to further develop your teaching skills, we have something for you. In anticipation of your arrival we have had a productive summer preparing number new and exciting initiatives while continuing to enhance our current programming for graduate students. In celebration of all those who have just been



We are located in the
Technology Enhanced
Learning Centre (TEL 1050).



granted their first TAs hip, this issue highlights six different types of TA support provided by the Teaching Commons especially designed for the new TA and International TA (ITA).



Did you know?

The Teaching Commons has an extensive list of Teaching and Learning Resources frequently used by all those who teach at York. Visit <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/resources-for-tas/>

Calling All New TAs and ITAs!



As a new graduate TA at York, you are in the unique and exciting role of both student and instructor. This may feel like a daunting task; however, the Teaching Commons has a number of orientations, professional development workshops and resources specifically designed to help you excel in your new role.

1) ITA Orientation Sessions: For all TAs new to Canada, we are offering new International TA (ITA) Orientation sessions. In addition to providing guidance

and resources to prepare ITAs for the Canadian classroom experience at York, this interactive 3 hour session will allow ITAs the opportunity to share, discuss and explore how one's nationality and cultural distinctiveness is an asset to the York learning community.

2) TA Orientations Sessions: For all domestic students, this interactive 3 hour session provides participants the guidance necessary to get started as a TA at York.

To Register for an ITA Orientation click on the time of your choosing:

September 3rd [2pm to 5pm](#)
in TEL 1014
September 4th [10am to 1pm](#)
in TEL 1009

To Register for the General TA Orientation click on the time of your choosing:

September 2nd [10am to 1pm](#) or [2pm to 5pm](#) in TEL 1014
September 3rd [10am to 1pm](#) in TEL 1014
September 4th [10am to 1pm](#) or [2pm to 5pm](#) in TEL 1014

**I'm not just new to York,
I'm new to Canada:
Strategies for
International TAs
October 9, 2014, 12-1pm
in TEL 1014**

To register, please visit:
<http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=171216>

For more information and an evolving list of events and resources, please see our webpage:
<http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/for-all-graduate-students/for-international-teaching-assistants-itas/>

3) Professional Development Workshops

While the TA and ITA orientation sessions provide all who TA at York with a solid foundation to begin their TAship, what does one do thereafter? The Teaching Commons offers a number of Professional Development Workshops that provides practical strategies and advice to ALL Graduate Students. These lunch time sessions, offered throughout the academic year are facilitated by Teaching Commons Staff, Faculty and Staff members from across the university, and participants in our [Senior Teaching Assistants \(STA\)](#) program. Workshop topics include: *Designing Your Own Tutorial*, *Accommodating Students with Disabilities in the University Classroom*; *Tips for Teaching Assistants*, *I'm not just new to York*, *I'm new to Canada: Strategies for International* to name only a few. In their third year running, these workshops have become an invaluable networking opportunity for all those who TA at York. Visit



<http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/ta-sessions/> for a full list of our 2014-2015 line up. Please see below descriptions of a number of newly added professional development workshops including *Marking and Grading* and two new *Academic Literacies Workshops*.

4) Invaluable Resources for the New TA and International TA (ITA)

As a TA at York University you will play a vital role in the experience of undergraduate students. You are also embarking on a central element of scholarly life – the passing on of knowledge. This requires you to be aware of your role and responsibility to your students, to your course director and to the university. The Teaching Commons houses on its website a number of important links and on-line documents to bring you into the loop and keep you well informed.



Visit <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/resource-list/>.

Of special note: Available the first week of September, you can download TA and ITA handbooks that provide invaluable information about the TA experience right at your fingertips.

5) Record of Completion

Did you know, to honour outstanding Graduate Students for their ongoing dedication to the enhancement and improvement of teaching and learning at York University the Teaching Commons offers a 'Record of Completion Certificate'? There are different requirements for the 'Record of Completion' Certificate, depending on whether you are a new TA (junior certificate) or more experienced TA (senior certificate). Visit our website for more details.

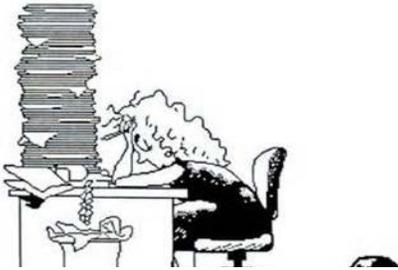
<http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/teaching-assistant-record-of-completion-certificate/>



6) TA Drop-in Hours coming soon!!

New this year, the TC's Teaching Commons Tutors (TCTs) will offer drop-in hours for new TAs in our new TC lounge space. Visit our website for in the coming weeks for more details about how you can sign up to meet with one of our TCTs. This will be a great opportunity to meet and network with other TAs on campus while also gaining support and guidance from our most senior level TAs at York.

New Professional Development Workshops!!



Hilda begins to think she should have attended that Marking and Grading Workshop offered by the Teaching Commons in September!

New Marking and Grading Workshop September 5, 2014, 10am-4pm in TEL 1014

This new workshop is designed for those who have received a Marker/Grader position as well as any Graduate TA (new or experienced) interested in developing sound assessment and grading practices. This full-day session will address types of formative and summative grading practices, explore validity and reliability issues, as well as offer participants practical strategies for grading with rubrics and supporting the ESL undergraduate student. Table discussions and group sharing activities will allow participants the opportunity to apply their knowledge gained from this workshop by grading sample assignments with their peers.

Spaces still available!! To register, please visit <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=134152>

New Academic Literacies Workshops

Teaching Critical Reading Skills Workshop for TAs October 2, 2014, 10am-12pm in TEL 1014

Having trouble getting your students to do the readings? Academic reading is central to academic success at university, so why is it so difficult to convince students to keep up with course readings? Effective academic reading is time-consuming, requires deep attention, critical reflection, the ability to connect readings to one another and to course objectives, and often requires approaching difficult readings more than once. Though experienced scholars understand this, students may not. This session focuses on “unpacking the skill set” required for effective academic reading and provides ideas about how to foster these skills in your students.

To register please visit: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=167497>

Teaching Critical Writing Skills Workshop for TAs October 2, 2014, 12:30pm-2:30pm in TEL 1014

This workshop, co-facilitated by a writing skills professor and a librarian, will highlight strategies, assignments and resources that can be used by TAs to strengthen undergraduate students’ skills in writing quality research papers and assignments.

Writing good research papers involves mastery of a complex set of process-focused skills, which may often be taken-for-granted. Examples include creating a working thesis, developing effective research strategies, gathering and noting ideas, planning an effective essay structure, and other strategic approaches to writing and editing. This workshop will teach participants how to unpack these commonly taken-for-granted skills; that is, techniques will be shared for making the implicit aspects of writing and research explicit. In addition, drawing on SPARK (<http://www.yorku.ca/spark>), an online modular tool designed to teach academic literacies, workshop participants will learn about:

- principles of effective assignment design for enhancing students’ abilities to write good research papers by addressing and integrating the component skills of writing and research
- how SPARK modules may be effectively integrated within courses to teach students the skills needed to write better research papers
- how such SPARK resources as tip sheets, worksheets, and exercises may be used or adapted to teach relevant skills

To register, please visit: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=169987>

Upcoming Professional Development Workshops

Designing your Tutorial

September 18, 2014, 12pm-1pm in TEL 1014

Teaching Students with Disabilities: Tips for Teaching Assistants

September 22, 2014, 12pm-1pm in TEL 1014

Teaching with Technology and in an Online Environment

September 29, 2014, 12pm-1pm in TEL 1014

To register for these sessions visit <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/ta-sessions/>

An Update on your Registrations for our Programs

If you pre-registered or applied for one of our programs beginning in the fall, see below for an update on how to determine your status or the next steps you should take...

TA Certificate in Teaching (TACT) Course

Pre-registration for the Fall 2014 Session of TACT is now closed. If you filled out our "registration of interest" form for the Fall 2014 Session, the course director, Dr. Yelin Su, will be in contact with you shortly via email, to explain the steps you must take and the requirements you must meet in order to officially register and enrol in the Fall 2014 Session of the TA Certificate in Teaching (TACT) Course.

If you missed pre-registration for the Fall 2014 session, not to worry as we will offer another session in Winter 2015. To pre-register for the Winter 2015 Session of TACT, please fill out the following "registration of interest" form:

<http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=127427> by November 1, 2014.

Please note that filling out the above form does not guarantee you a spot in the TACT Course nor is it a registration for the course. It merely indicates your interest in the course and allows us to email you the formal registration form with all of the requirements and information.

Senior Teaching Assistant (STA) Program

The deadline for submitting applications for the Senior Teaching Assistant (STA) program has now past and registration is now full. Do keep in mind, all those who will be completing the TA Certificate in Teaching (TACT) Program noted above, this is the program for you next year!

Please visit <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/professional-development/senior-teaching-assistant-program/> for more information on this program.

What do participants say about our workshops?

"I really enjoyed all of the workshops I attended and got a lot out of them. Thanks to the Teaching Commons for organizing them! Thank you and kind regards."

"This was a very sufficient training session."

"I am going to prepare my next tutorial using the time distribution shown in this workshop."

"The lab that I TA is almost parallel course to the lecture and requires a lot of its own design. I will be able to apply today's topics immediately to better structure my own labs."

