

# Teaching Commons News For Graduate Students

## Recognizing Graduate Contributions at York



June is a time to celebrate the many contributions and accomplishments of graduate Teaching Assistants across York. It is also a good time to reflect on the past year, and prepare for continued development in Fall 2015. This month finds the Teaching Commons recognizing the hard work of TAs who have earned the Record of Completion certificate (June 22). We also note some of the many graduate-school teachers who contributed to York for TiF. Finally, the June newsletter also contains Part One of an extended interview with Andrew

Molas, who attended nearly every Teaching & Learning workshop offered by the Teaching Commons in 2014-2015 (p. 2, below) Also, check with your Faculty or Department for other exciting events and recognitions of your teaching colleagues.

### *TiF a Smashing Success!*

On May 21-22, the Teaching Commons hosted its third annual teaching conference, Teaching in Focus (TiF).

Expanded this year to a second day in order to accommodate all the great proposals received by the Commons, TiF featured many graduate students as presenters, including highly engaging presentations by the Equity Reading group and President's University-Wide/LAPS Award winner Yael Machtinger.

One of the highlights of the conference was a keynote presentation of University-Wide Teaching Award winners moderated by Provost Rhonda Lenton. The all-star panel featured graduate students Machtinger and Rehanna Siew Sarju, who got their audience's attention with their good ideas and passion for teaching.

See the TiF story online! <https://storify.com/YUteaching/see-what-everyone-had-to-say-during-tif>.

P.S. Check out the STAY Storify in: [A Very Short Story About STAY](#)



Please help us with the design of our website, <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca>, particularly in terms of the navigation. Let us know what information you seek from our website and how easy or difficult it currently is to find. Your feedback and suggestions are most welcome! Let us know how we can make our website easier for you to use by emailing [teaching@yorku.ca](mailto:teaching@yorku.ca)



# “I think they are valuable resources”: Part One of an Interview with TACT/Record of Completion holder Andrew Molas

Name: **Andrew Molas**  
Teaches in: **Philosophy, Liberal Arts and Professional Studies**  
Degree: **Ph.D, First Year**  
What year are you in? **First Year**  
Research Topic: **I am currently interested in the role of empathy in mental health care**  
TA experience prior to this year: **No TA experience prior to Fall-Winter 2014-2015**



## 1. How did you hear about the Teaching Commons programs and why did you participate?

I received an email from our Graduate Program Assistant about a TA Orientation meeting for new TAs. At that meeting I learned about the Junior and Senior 'Record of Completion' Certificates, as well as the [TACT](#) and [STA](#) courses/programs offered by the Teaching Commons. At first, I was initially interested in just doing enough workshops to obtain the 'Record of Completion' certificate(s) so I could guarantee a spot in the TACT program for the Winter 2015 term. But since most of the workshops were held on days, and times, which did not conflict with my TA duties or graduate course work, I took advantage of the opportunities when they presented themselves. By the end of my second year, I will already have completed both Certificates, TACT, and STA and I am thankful to have earned them because I think they are valuable resources to carry forward throughout my academic and teaching career.

## 2. How have the workshops you've attended helped you in your teaching and/or your undergraduate students' learning experiences? '

Part of the reason why I decided to register for as many Professional Development workshops as I could is because I believe it is never a bad thing to be as prepared as possible, and to acquire as much information about a topic as you can (in this case, teaching in higher education). The workshops I have attended have given me tips and strategies for engaging with my students and to create a learning environment where they a) feel safe to contribute to our classrooms discussions and b) want to participate in our tutorials. And based on the student evaluations, which were a necessary component for the completion of the TACT program, my students really enjoyed having me as their TA this semester and appreciated my application of some of the techniques I acquired from the Teaching Commons. For instance, I used the "Start, Stop, Continue" method at the midterm mark, just to gauge if I was meeting my students' needs.

## 3. Which workshop(s) would you classify as the 'best'? Why?'

For me, the 'best' workshops are the ones that provide suggestions on how to do things and offer more of a prescriptive account of what to do in situation X, rather than a workshop which is mostly descriptive and relies too heavily on theoretical underpinnings to carry it forward. The reason why I think this, is because, presumably, the graduate students who are interested in attending these

Did you know that by obtaining a Record of Completion you are eligible to enroll in our TACT program?

Visit our website for more details about the different requirements for the 'Record of Completion' Certificate, depending on whether you are a new TA (junior certificate) or more experienced TA (senior certificate).

<http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/graduate-students/courses-workshops-and-events/courses/record-of-completion-certificate/>

### 3. Which workshop(s) would you classify as the 'best'? Why? (cont'd from p. 2)

Professional Development workshops are unfamiliar with the content being presented. If you're a first-year TA, presumably there are many things you may not be familiar with. So the workshops which offered concise, practical advice were my favourite (e.g. the "Teaching Critical Reading/Writing Skills" and the "Learn How to "DO" a Teaching Dossier" workshops). I also preferred the workshops where the presenter took the lead in the discussion, rather than the workshops that relied heavily on group activity. Although I understand the purpose of a "workshop" is to actively participate and share ideas with your peers, not everyone feels comfortable working in groups.

This interview has been very slightly condensed and edited. Look for Part Two in our next issue, focusing on the TACT program.

## Celebrating TC's Record of Completion Awardees!

Speaking of taking the initiative...the Teaching Commons has had an unprecedented number of graduate students who have earned our Junior and/or Senior Record of Completion Certificate since its inception in 2012.



The requirements to obtain the Junior certificate are to attend at least 5 workshops offered by the Teaching Commons within one academic year. The graduate students that have earned the Senior certificate have attended at least 4 workshops in addition to attending the STAY Symposium on May 1, 2015, in its entirety. Most of these workshops are 1 hour in duration and are facilitated by Teaching Commons staff or Senior Teaching Assistants. Examples of topics covered in these workshops include designing tutorials, marking and grading, engaging with students, active learning strategies, academic integrity, dealing with classroom and student conflict, human rights in the classroom, to name only a few.

In celebration of these outstanding graduate students whose dedication and commitment to teaching and learning at York deserves to be recognized, the TC will host a **Record of Completion Celebration** on Monday June 22, 2015. Distinguished guests include graduate supervisors, members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, the office of the Associate Vice-President of Teaching and Learning and the Teaching Commons.

The Teaching Commons is very proud to present the names of the graduate students who have earned a Junior or Senior Record of Completion Certificate.

#### Senior Certificate Award Winners:

Alia Abbas	Robert Codd-Downey	Muhammad Hassan	Aidan Moir	Vennila Rajaguru
Pelin Asci	Nima Dehghansai	Claudia Hoang	Andrew Molas	Jamie Robertson
Iqra Ashfaq	Stephen Di Monte	Paula John	Ella Morton	Olivia Schuman
Khameiel Al Tamimi	Bryan Downey	Alexander Leferman	David Outevsky	Aaron Siu
Marta Castilho da Silva	Katrina Gaibisels	Mahshid Moghei	Elisabeth Paquette	Christina Van Den Brink

#### Junior Certificate Award Winners:

Hiba Alhomoud	Terry Trowbridge	Ciann Wilson	Althea (Serena) Yi	Sophya Yumakulov
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Congratulations to these Record of Completion Awardees! We will send you a formal invitation to this celebration of your achievement shortly, by June 5. If your name does not appear in this list, but you have met the requirements, please contact Natasha May ([maynat@yorku.ca](mailto:maynat@yorku.ca)) so that we may double check our records. On the other hand, if you are still hoping to earn a certificate and are looking for more workshops, the Human Rights in the Classroom workshop still needs to be rescheduled. Please register your interest for this workshop (if you haven't already) and we will be in touch as soon as it is rescheduled:

<http://teachingcommonsforms.apps01.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=177467>

For more information about the 'Record of Completion' Certificate Program, please see our website:

<http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/graduate-students/courses-workshops-and-events/courses/record-of-completion-certificate/>