

Teaching Assistants & Lab Instructors

About your Union

Welcome to the organization that represents UVic Educational Employees, including Teaching Assistants. As Graduate Students, we naturally feel an affinity with our departments. However, everyone in your department also belongs to a group that represents his or her interests as an employee: the faculty are members of the Faculty Association; the administrative staff are members of the Professional Employees Association; the office staff are members of CUPE 951; and you are a member of CUPE 4163. It's your union, and you set its agenda.

Most Teaching Assistants at universities across Canada are union members. Here at UVic TAs have been part of CUPE since 1997. Since then, CUPE members have fought for increased wages, safer working conditions, more just hiring practices, and other benefits. In 2006 we were making \$17.49/hour. Today we earn \$23.27.

UVic works because we do

Three components make up CUPE Local 4163. Teaching Assistants and CASS employees are members of CUPE 4163's Component one. Second Language Instructors make up Component two. Sessionals make up Component three. This fall, approximately 1500 CUPE 4163 members will be working for UVic. Together, CUPE members are responsible for three quarters of all the instruction that happens on campus.

CUPE 4163 is part of a national union: The Canadian Union of Public Employees. With more than half a million members, CUPE is Canada's largest union. We chose to organize with CUPE because it is a decentralized union and respects the principle of "local autonomy." This means that we can maintain democratic control over our Local, while drawing on the financial, legal, and bargaining strength of a national union.

Orientation Package 2009

CUPE 4163

A guide to the 2006-2010 contract

Your Contract: Rights & Responsibilities

If you have not received a copy of your contract from your department, please ask them for one or visit www.cupe4163.ca

Orientation (Article 3.02) Your attendance at the orientation is paid time by the employer for one half-hour. This should be documented on your work schedule and review form (see below). Other union meetings are generally voluntary.



Wages (Schedule 1, page 47) Teaching Assistants are paid at the senior assistants rate for component one. **As of September 1, 2009, the rate is \$23.27/hour.**

Vacation Pay (Article 16) For most component one employees, 4% vacation pay is added to regular pay, unless arrangements are made to take time off in lieu of vacation pay. Check your pay stubs to ensure accuracy.

Priority of Hiring (Appendix A). Students have priority over non-students, and grad students have priority over undergrad students. Graduate students previously appointed to a bargaining unit position as incoming students, and who will be in their 2nd year of a Masters program or the 2nd through 4th year of a PhD program have top priority of hiring (See Appointment Priority Policy A). Departments that offer a one-year Masters Programme follow a different appointment priority policy (See Variance 1). Please see page 48 of your contract for more details on the policy.

Discipline (Article 8) When there is a disciplinary issue, Article 8 guides those involved with the principle of "progressive discipline." Progressive discipline means you first must be informed of the problem behaviour and be given a chance to correct it. If things do not improve, then the discipline may progress; but it must progress through a series of actions (e.g., written warning, suspension) before it can lead to termination. You cannot be disciplined without just cause.

Probationary Period (Article 13.03) If you are registered as a student, you will be on probation during the first two terms of your employment as a TA in the department. Probation is a "trial period," where you may not get all of the same protections as regular employees. For example, you do not have access to the protections under Article 8 (Discipline), and may be let go with only 48 hours notice. However, the union has argued successfully for extending the probationary periods of employees who would otherwise be terminated.

Grievance Procedure (Article 10) Grievances stem from violations of the collective agreement. You might have a grievance if, for example, your department isn't paying you according to the contract or if you've been unjustly disciplined. The contract outlines a formal grievance procedure. However, many grievances in our local are solved informally with the employer. Please note that there are time limits involved with grievances. You should contact the union as soon as possible to discuss any concerns.

Right to Refuse (Article 12) The employer understands and recognizes that Union members do not cross picket lines. No employee will be asked to cross a picket line, nor be subject to discipline for refusing to cross a picket line.

Hours of Work, Scheduling (Article 14) If you are registered in an academic degree program, you will normally be limited to a maximum of 14 hours of work per week on average over the term. You will not be required to work in excess of 21 hours in any given week (excluding self-scheduled work) without your written agreement. Work (e.g., marking final exams) should be scheduled so as to not interfere with your academic duties.

Breaks (Article 14.04) You are entitled to a 20 minute paid break for every 2 hrs of consecutive teaching. You are entitled to an unpaid meal break of at least ½ hr during any shift of more than 5 hrs. If you work a full time shift, you are entitled to 15 minute breaks during the first and second half of your shift.

Work Schedule & Review Form - Duties Checklist (Article 14.03) TAs need not work more hours than they are paid. The work schedule and review form is designed to prevent overwork. (Departments should hand out the Form).

1. At the beginning of the term make sure you and your supervisor fill out the "Checklist of assigned duties and approved work schedule form." Make sure to sign the form.
2. Keep track of the number of hours you work on each duty/ responsibility.
3. At or about the mid-term of the academic term fill out the actual hours worked. This is the time to catch any problems before they result in overwork. Sign the form.

Health and Safety (Article 19). You have the right to refuse unsafe working conditions, without fear of discipline. You also have the right to work in a harassment-free environment.

Contact the union office if you think the collective agreement is not being followed.

Getting involved?

It's important that members from a diverse group of departments participate on committees. Lack of skills or experience need not inhibit anyone from joining a committee, as there is free training available.

Joint Executive (JE)

The Joint Executive has the important role of overseeing all union business between general membership meetings (e.g., grievance reports, financial business, political action, etc.). The Joint Executive is elected each year at the Semi-Annual General Meeting in October. Each component has a president, two vice-presidents, a recording secretary, a treasurer and members at large. Combined, they form the Joint Executive. The overall president of the local is elected by the Joint Executive members. Some of the Joint Executive positions receive a monthly stipend of \$50 to \$200.

Communications Committee

Members of the Communications Committee strategize effective ways to communicate with 4163 members, others at UVic, and the larger community. Members on this committee create posters, newsletters, websites, emails, press releases and more. During a bargaining year, this committee will also be involved in developing overall strategies for educating workers on contract issues, and ensuring they are kept up to date on negotiations. This committee is open to all members.

Education Committee

Members of the Education Committee keep 4163 members up-to-date on educational opportunities. We try to send as many members as possible to various workshops, conferences, schools, etc. This committee is open to all members.

Grievance Committee

Members of the GC review grievances to determine the best course of action for our members, and sign off on any resolutions. The committee is made up of the Presidents of each component and any Chief Stewards. The GC works closely with the local's staff and Department Stewards on particular cases.

Health and Safety

The Health and Safety committee works to ensure that CUPE members work in a safe environment. They keep members informed on possible risks, and they investigate all claims relating to health and safety.

Labour Management Committee (LMC)

While the Grievance Committee deals with individual cases, the LMC deals with the administration of the collective agreement at a policy level, in between bargaining periods. Members on the LMC are paid a stipend for every hour they sit with management. Any member can join this committee at any time of the year. The LMC turns into the Contract Committee when bargaining starts.

Contract Committee

The contract committee is active leading up to and during bargaining. Members conduct research regarding our collective agreement and ways in which it can be improved. Members may develop membership surveys, research other collective agreements in Canada, develop bargaining proposals, etc. This committee is recruiting now!

Political Action Committee (PAC)

Members of the PAC work on larger political campaigns. In recent years this committee has worked on tuition fee reduction, anti-poverty, anti-globalization campaigns and the CUPE BC Solidarity Action Plan. With the Joint Executive, the PAC decides which campaigns will receive attention and implements strategies for action on these issues. This committee is open to all members at any time of the year. To get involved with this committee, or to suggest campaigns which might be of interest, email cupe4163pac@gmail.com.

Budget Committee

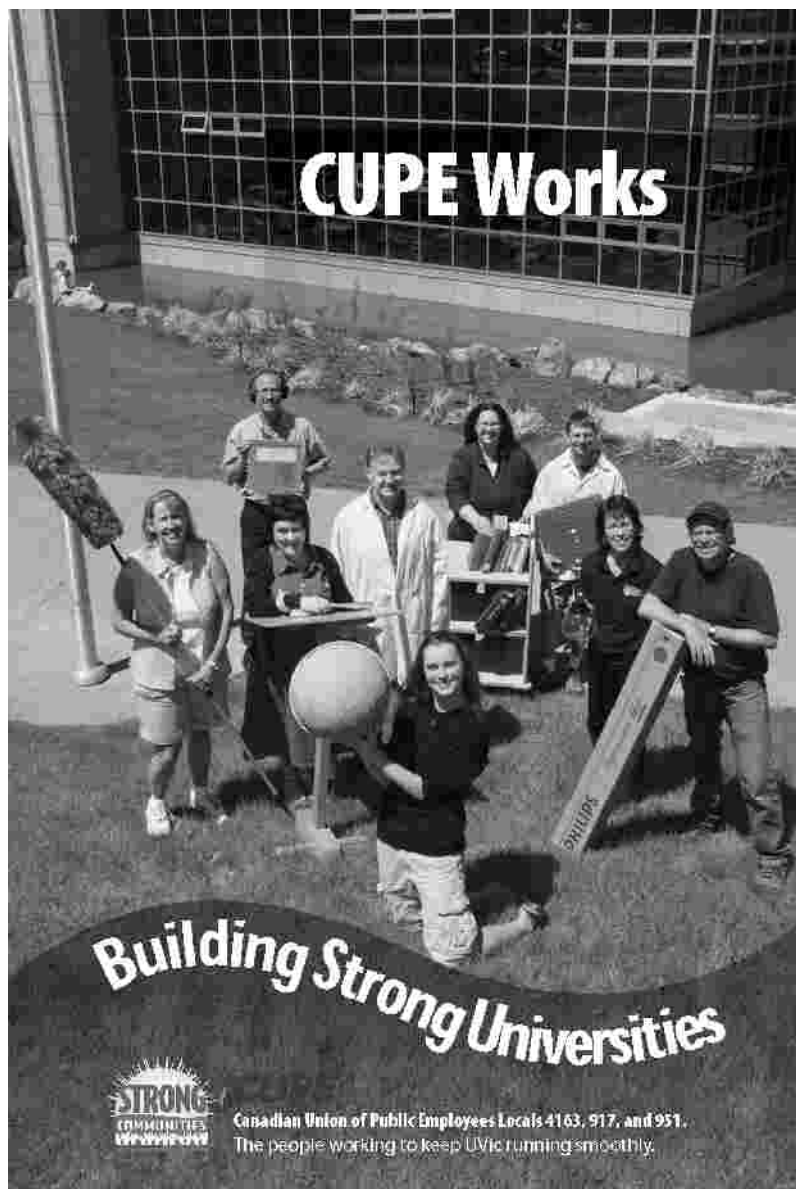
Members of the Budget Committee oversee the financial affairs of the union. The presidents and treasurers of each component sit on this committee. The treasurer of CUPE 4163 is paid position. The main responsibility of the Budget Committee is to prepare the annual budget in advance of the Annual General Meeting in March.

Union Stewards

Stewards' Council

Each department has the right to a steward. If there isn't a steward in your department, CUPE 4163 can help you organize a meeting to elect a steward. The stewards from each department make up the Stewards' Council. This council provides a forum in which representatives have a chance to talk about CUPE work-related problems in their departments and get ideas about possible solutions from people in other places. The council is extremely important because it is here that the union gathers information about what's going on in the departments. The council meets once monthly. It is co-chaired by two stewards who are elected. If a steward attends at least 1/2 of the council meetings and submits a report, the steward receives a \$50.00 honourarium. There are several workshops to train CUPE stewards.





Your role in CUPE 4163

Nothing important is done without the approval of the CUPE 4163 membership. At a minimum, there are two general membership meetings per year, one in October and one in March. It is here that executives are elected, new budgets are passed, and any business is done dealing with the membership as a whole (e.g., changes to the bylaws). Meetings are conducted according to Roberts' Rules of Order. All members should attend meetings to vote on issues.

The members that show up to the meetings determine the future actions of the union.

Our local is governed by our constitution and bylaws, both of which can be found on our website. The bylaws dictate how the internal affairs of the union may be conducted. Any changes to these bylaws must be voted on by members at a general membership meeting.

Social Justice Fund

You'll notice that once per year, one dollar comes off of your pay cheque for CUPE 4163's social justice fund. This fund is used to donate to groups working around the world which pursue goals that we deem important. Half of the Social Justice Fund will be distributed by vote of the members at the October General Meeting and half will be distributed by vote of the members at the March General Meeting. Past beneficiaries include: Our Place, Haliburton Farm, The Stephen Lewis Foundation (twice), Save The Children, PEERS (Prostitutes Empowerment Education Resource Society), Street Newz and most recently The Cool Aid Society.

Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 4163

Teaching Assistants, Research Assistants, Lab Instructors, Graduate Lecturers,
Language Instructors, CASS employees, Cultural Assistants, & others

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