CUPE 4163 Department Presentations

**Outline**

Welcome to CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) Local 4163! CUPE 4163 represents non-faculty education employees at UVic, including all TAs. You are automatically a member of CUPE4163 as a result of your TA appointment If you’re new, we’re happy to have you join! If you’ve been a TA before, welcome back.

CUPE 4163 formed in 1998, in response to an attempted TA pay cut in Sciences and longstanding discontentment in other faculties. Since then, CUPE 4163 has been the official bargaining agent for Teaching and Lab Assistants, as well as other employees at UVic. I’m here to tell you about the rights the Union has negotiated for you over the years, and to talk about your role in making the Union function.

**Part 1: What is a Union and what does it do for you?**

* A Union is a collective made up of all of its members acts on your behalf regarding your working conditions with University of Victoria
* We also, through the collective agreement grievance procedure, help enforce these rights if they are violated by UVic.

Some key rights you should know about from day one:

* **You should never be pressured or required to work more than you are being paid for.** Track your hours and if you become concerned that you might run out of hours, tell your course administrator (usually the instructor) right away. Your department is required to take action to make sure you don’t go over your hours.
* Grad students have priority over undergrads and non-students for TA work
* If you’re a grad student, your TA appointment must be between 98 hours and 196 hours in Fall and Spring (smaller appointments are allowed in Summer term or if you request it)
* You should work no more than 14 hours/week on average, and no more than 21 hours in any given week (applies to students only)
* You have the right to work in an environment free from sexual and/or personal harassment
* There is collective agreement language that specifically inoculates you from academic harm when you exercise your rights
* As of September 1st 2016, the TA wage is $24.69/hour for all TAs, plus 4% vacation pay

Other negotiated rights:

* TAs attending academic conferences can apply for $250 through the CUPE conference award fund
* Rights concerning sick leave, safe work environment, training, grievance procedure
* See the Collective Agreement at cupe4136.ca (or the Quick Guide) for more details, or contact our office

**Part 2: Where do you fit in?**

* As Teaching Assistants you are part of Component 1 of CUPE 4163 along with Lab Assistants, and Computer Support workers here at UVic. There are two other components, representing Second Language Teachers, Cultural Assistants and Res Life workers (Comp 2) and sessional lecturers (Comp 3).
* The Union exists to protect its members and improve working conditions. It requires member participation to give it direction and ensure its success. We are only as strong as you make us.
* The more engaged you are with the Union, the stronger the Union will be and the better we can represent you as a worker

Speaking of member participation...

* We rely on all members to be familiar with the collective agreement and inform the Union if they hear about a possible violation. (The Union will never act on your concern without your go-ahead, and confidentiality is guaranteed.)
* There are 2 General Meetings a year, in the fall and in the spring, where the direction of CUPE 4163 is decided. A new executive is elected each year at the Spring GM.
* CUPE 4163 puts on a couple of socials a year so you can get to know your Union better by meeting members from other departments, and the executive and staff. Socials include free or cheap food and drinks.
* Each department should have a steward, whose role is to liaise between the members in that department and the union. With your help, they should be aware of any issues happening in the department, and they can also be your point of contact for Union news.
* Get to know your department steward(s), or---better yet--- become one! Stewards play a vital role in the Union, and any member can become a steward (even if you’re brand new!). The Stewards Council meets monthly from Sept. to April to exchange news on issues from their departments.

\*Presenters should be given the list of stewards so they can name/introduce the steward (if it’s not them, of course). And for departments that don’t have one they can make a special effort to get someone to volunteer. \*

* Stay informed by reading the emails you receive from CUPE/your steward and checking the CUPE bulletin board in your department. (If you don’t see one, contact the office at CUPE4163.ca or through the CUPE4163 Facebook page!)
* As member of CUPE 4163, you are also part of the larger CUPE BC and CUPE national organizations, as well as the larger unionized workforce in BC and in Canada.
* There are several other Unions on Campus and we try to cooperate with them as well as the Graduate Student Society and the University of Victoria Student Society

**Part 3: The rewards of member participation**

* We have a brand new collective agreement, which was reached without the need for a strike thanks to the active engagement of our members and a high strike vote turnout.
* The strike vote showed the employer that our members were informed and invested in the outcome of bargaining. This drastically improved the tone of bargaining--- the employer went from refusing to budge on its position, to accepting almost all of our proposals. Gains we made include
  + Protection from academic harm (discussed earlier)
  + Expanded compassionate leave
  + Improved hiring transparency for TAs
  + A five-year-term for our collective agreement (the employer had been insisting on a 10-year term, which is unprecedented in BC)
* With information from members, the Union can file and settle grievances when the employer violates the collective agreement or interprets it incorrectly. These set a precedent that improves conditions for all members.

**Part 4: Recap, and where to find out more**

If there is anything I want you to take away from this talk it’s these three things:

* You are now a member of CUPE 4163, Component 1
* As a worker you have rights, including the right to stand up for them. Don’t hesitate to talk to your steward or a CUPE 4163 staff member if you have any kind of concern.
* The Union is here to help you, but it’s only as strong as you make it.

For contact information and more, see

* collective agreement quick guide
* our newly/soon-to-be renovated website (cupe4163.ca)
* facebook page (CUPE 4163 Uvic Education Workers)
* Any discussion you have with CUPE 4163 is confidential in nature

**Part 5: Pass around sign-in sheet and pens, answer questions**

* Why we collect names and email addresses:
  + We give the list of attendees to your department so you get paid for this ½ hour
  + We collect email addresses so we can contact you when we have information for you throughout the term. The union is supposed to get your contact info from the employer, but their email list often doesn’t arrive until 5 weeks into the term.
* I would be happy to answer any questions, if there are any?